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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 TOKYO 002441

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR OES/IHA COMELLA
HHS FOR NIH AMY PATTERSON

SIPDIS
SENSITIVE

E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: [TBIO](#) [PTER](#) [EAGR](#) [JA](#) [PARM](#) [PREL](#) [BWC](#)
SUBJECT: JAPAN: MISUSE OF LIFE SCIENCES RESEARCH

REF: A. STATE 56179

[1](#)B. 05 TOKYO 6750

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[1](#)1. (U) This is an action request. Please see paragraph 10.

[1](#)2. (U) On April 18, ESToff and EST FSN delivered the talking points in reftel on the misuse of life science research and left a non-paper with the Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare's (MHLW) Office of International Cooperation Director Kaname Kanai, Health Sciences Division Deputy Director Noriyo Yoshikawa and Tuberculosis and Infectious Diseases Control Division Deputy Director Takehiko Suzuki. Office of Health Emergency Preparedness and Response Chief Fumi Irie and International Affairs Division official Reiko Akizuki were also present.

[1](#)3. (SBU) The officials present at the meeting acknowledged that the dual-use potential of life sciences research could be of concern, but admitted that they were not aware of any current discussions taking place within the GOJ or Japanese academia on the subject. They also recognized that work on dual-use has been taken up under the BWC work program. The officials explained that MHLW is still working on incorporating the concept of biosecurity into Japan's infectious diseases legal framework, and as a result, discussions on dual-use were still off into the future.

[1](#)4. (U) Mostly in listening mode, the officials were unclear as to how the work plan and international collaboration proposed by the National Science Advisory Board for Biosecurity (NSABB) would tie into existing international mechanisms. ESToff explained that what was being proposed would not supplant any existing work within the BWC and WHO, but rather was a request for the exchange of information and opinions between the United States and Japan. The officials offered to circulate the non-paper among relevant offices within MHLW, but requested further information (questions listed below) and a more concrete "concepts paper" that outlined what the Board envisioned its cooperation with Japan to look like, before providing a more formal response to the demarche and the name of a point of contact.

[1](#)5. (U) The officials also asked the following questions.

-- Are the NSABB and/or USG requesting a formalized partnership of some sort? Does Washington plan to ultimately establish a multilateral network as a result of the collaboration, or will the "global partnerships" be strictly on a bilateral level?

-- After Japan exchanges information with the United States and the NSABB establishes a relationship with the GOJ POC, are there any plans for the USG to put forward some kind of international guidelines or proposals on the dual-use of life sciences in consultation with other countries? Or, will the relationship be strictly for the exchange of information and opinions that both countries' POCs will take back to their respective governments?

-- The officials asked for a clarification on the relationship between the proposal and the US-Japan Workshop on S&T for a Secure and Safe Society (SSS), the BWC and the US-Japan Cooperative Medical Sciences Program (CMSP). ESToff provided a basic explanation of the differences among the four, but the officials requested further information if possible.

-- How does the NSABB plan to contact the Japanese POC? Would individual agency members of the Board directly contact their counterpart agencies in Japan (example: HHS and MHLW), or would all contacts go through the POC? The officials commented that it would be confusing if the NSABB had only one contact but Japan was to have several, both at the government and non-governmental levels.

16. (U) On April 25, ESToff and EST FSN met with Yutaka Hishiyama, Director for Research, in the Secretariat Office of the Science Council of Japan (SCJ) to discuss the same topic with the non-governmental science council. Hishiyama also understood the potential threat posed to society by

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the potential of dual-use life sciences research, but admitted that this topic has not been raised or discussed within the SCJ. He did explain that concerns over such dual-use have grown especially since the September 11 attacks. As an example, Hishiyama said that MHLW would revise pathogen-handling requirements within the Infectious Diseases Law based on these concerns. (For further details see ref B).

17. (U) Hishiyama explained that the SCJ has drafted a basic code of conduct for researchers in Japan. It covers a broad range of general issues that hint at the concept of "misuse", stating that scientists must be responsible to ensure a safe society, human health and welfare and nature conservation. Though not using the specific term "misuse", the code can be interpreted as stating that scientists should not produce anything that can harm society, including weapons. It also urges researchers to ensure that their studies are open to the public and that they follow Japan's laws and regulations. The code does not specifically touch on the dual-use of life sciences. The main purpose of the SCJ's code of conduct is to prevent researchers from stealing and/or fabricating data. The SCJ established a committee to work on the code of conduct for researchers in December 2005 in response to several incidents where data was fabricated or samples were stolen by researchers from other institutions.

18. (U) Note: The SCJ's mandate is to deliberate on important scientific matters, implement its decisions, and promote the effective exchange of knowledge between researchers to achieve greater productivity in scientific research. Its 210 representative members are elected from approximately 760,000 scientists nationwide. When requested, the Council offers advice and recommendations to the government, and has the authority to offer the same on its own initiative. It is a member of the InterAcademy

Council and is the closest equivalent of the National Academy of Sciences (NAS) in Japan. End note.

¶9. (SBU) Comment: Both MHLW and SCJ officials were aware that a discussion on the potential misuse of life sciences research was taking place internationally. However, it does not appear that the topic is being seriously discussed among researchers and government officials in Japan. The GOJ is working to steadily boost its measures to protect against potential bioterrorism threats. As international engagement on the topic of dual-use increases, the GOJ will likely come on board to participate in the discussion. For the time being, MHLW officials are looking forward to Washington's answers to their questions. EST will continue to engage the GOJ on this issue as more information becomes available. End comment.

¶10. (U) Action request: Post requests answers to MHLW's questions and any further information that can be provided to the GOJ on the NSABB's envisioned cooperation with Japan on this issue.

DONOVAN